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ABSTRACT

The enrollment declines currently being experienced by many community colleges can reduce the number of classes offered, which in turn can result in a lack of basic skills training for underprepared entering students. To help increase enrollment and weekly student contact hours (WSCH) and respond to the needs of underprepared students, Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC), in California, has developed strategies and programs working with both area high schools and currently enrolled students. Partnerships with local high schools include an "afternoon college" from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., offering high school students credit classes in basic skills and personal development; advanced mathematics classes for students at a local Science Magnet; and WSCH-generating classes helping students prepare for the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Efforts undertaken by the college to increase WSCH among students already enrolled include the addition of directed studies components to pre-existing classes, the development of WSCH-generating tutorial classes, and the implementation of a "Guarantee Day" at the beginning of semesters and an "Add Desk" in the administration building to respond to student demands for additional courses and course sections. In addition to these existing programs, proposed strategies include providing refresher courses or fundamentals classes for underprepared students, offering remedial classes in civics to assist non-native students, and providing faculty or paraprofessional assistance to students in college-level skills classes through laboratory sessions. (TGI)

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Strategies for Increasing Enrollment and WSCH During a Period of Downsizing

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RICHARD A. MOYER, PH.D.
STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING ENROLLMENT AND WSCH
DURING A PERIOD OF DOWNSIZING
ACCCA CONFERENCE
MARCH 14, 1996

I -- The Problem

Enrollments in most colleges are down; students who want to enroll in more units aren't finding the classes they need at the times they want them; students entering colleges are underprepared for college level work because of a lack of training in basic skills, i.e. math, English, writing, problem solving and communication; and, many instructors are neither prepared for nor willing to work with underprepared students.

II -- Los Angeles Valley College Programs in Place

a. Los Angeles Valley College has a successful Puente Program that has been successful in assisting Hispanic students with English 28, English 101 and entry into four-year institutions.

b. Los Angeles Valley College received a Title III grant as an Hispanic Serving Institution(in the past 10 years the student population coming from Hispanic backgrounds has increased from 16% to 30%). The Title III program has two tracks, 1) establish a program based on the Puente model for Math and the Sciences, and 2) establish a "one-stop center" to facilitate entry into the college for students who come from families with little or no history of college attendance.

c. Los Angeles Valley College with Tech Prep support has established an "afternoon college(3-6 p.m.)" designed to serve high school students, the majority of whom are from diversity backgrounds. These college credit classes focus on basic skills and personal development, but college level classes are offered as well. This semester over 400 students have enrolled and it is expected that many will either matriculate to Valley College or continue to take classes while in high school. An introductory Computer Science class was offered and so many students wanted to enroll that an additional four sections were opened. An important goal of this program is to better prepare high school students for college, while they are still in high school.

d. Los Angeles Valley College is in a partnership with North Hollywood High School sponsored by the Metropolitan Transit Authority. A college counselor is assigned to work with students enrolled in a Transportation Academy. The counselor teaches a Personal Development class(WSCH generating) preparing

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students for college and also helping with career guidance. In addition traditional and non-traditional college classes are offered for these students to help facilitate their work in the academy and transition on to college. Currently, Valley offered the students our English Placement Test and is beginning an English 21 class. Last Fall, a special Geography class was offered which provided students with background on how transportation systems evolve and then they were taken to the Bay area where they spent one day with BART and another at U.C. Berkeley where they received an orientation from several appropriate academic departments.

e. Los Angeles Valley College has established a partnership with Francis Polytechnic High School's Science and Technology Magnet. The college offers Personal Development classes at Valley for 9th grade students which are designed to familiarize them with a college, inform them about careers in the science field and expose them to the various science departments at the college. In addition, at their request, the college is offering a college class in PASCAL at Polytechnic High. Over 50 students wanted to enroll. They have asked that other classes be offered at their campus as well.

f. For many years Los Angeles Valley College has offered advanced math classes for the Science Magnet at Van Nuys High School. This is valuable for both the students who are able to take Calculus classes and the faculty who are able to teach highly motivated and gifted students.

g. For the second year now, Los Angeles Valley College will be offering a WSCH generating SAT preparation class for local high school students taught at local high schools. This enables the college to enroll the students and then access them with materials for future enrollment. Other colleges in our district do this as well.

h. the Los Angeles Unified School District is divided into K-12 clusters focused around one or more high schools. Los Angeles Valley College is in the process of establishing offices and a meeting room on our campus for the local Cluster administrator.

i. Los Angeles Valley College is in a partnership with UCLA and the Polytechnic High School cluster in an effort to secure an Annenberg Grant. The grant request has been submitted.

The value of these programs, most of which involve local high

schools, is that they bring the college into contact with potential full-time students and begin the process of preparing students to better compete at the college level by enrolling the students in WSCH generating classes.

j. Los Angeles Valley College has begun the process of "growing" additional WSCH from within the college.

1. Faculty are adding directed studies components to pre-existing classes. For example, one Sociology instructor who previously volunteered extra time for a 20 hour simulation that her students participated in, now enrolls those students in a Directed Studies class; the students get an extra unit of credit, the college gets tuition WSCH and the instructor receives an extra hour per week of hourly pay(win,win).

2. Departments are adding WSCH-generating Tutorial classes which are designed to either help students persist in traditionally high attrition classes or prepare students to retake the classes with a greater potential for success.

3. For the last three semesters, Los Angeles Valley College has implemented a program we call "Guarantee Day." This program is a one-day event for continuing students designed to help them get the schedules they want. Except for Labs, limited station classes and an absence of classrooms, the college adds class sections if a class in the schedule fills and there is an indication that there is a demand for more sections or if there is an already existing but open class at the time students want the class, they are rolled over into the open section whether they have indicated that as a choice or not. Though students often seek "popular" instructors, they have persisted in their new sections. The college has responded to the pattern of demands in future semesters by authorizing department chairs to add additional sections, particularly in high demand lab classes or by placing classes in the schedule that list room and time, but are not assigned teachers until numbers justify it. We now offer 5-6 English 101"s at 8 a.m., where previously only one was offered. Since the inception of this program, the average student WSCH has increased by almost .4 hours per week.

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4. For many years, Los Angeles Valley College has created an "Add Desk" in the main lobby that is staffed by the college administrators for the first two weeks of a semester. If space exists in class sections once a semester begins, students who are seeking a class schedule can come to the add desk, learn if classes have space and then receive an add card which guarantees them admission to the class. This saves students the efforts of going from class to class to see if space is available. It is possible now that with phone registration, this program will be modified. Having administrators staff the desk provides them with an excellent opportunity to meet our student clientele and provide a valuable service at the same time. This practice has been adopted by other colleges in our district.

5. Los Angeles Valley College has both GAIN and JTPA programs and these have proven effective in directing students who first take their not-for-credit classes into our credit programs and classes.

III -- Programs to Think About

1. Often the decision to enroll in college is a difficult one for many students and asking them to conform to our rigid semester oriented schedule is confusing and frustrating. When they decide in October or March that they want to go to college, we should be prepared to accepted them immediately into open entry/open exit classes if they make sense. Many students lack basic skills or are not current in basic skills and the open entry classes could provide them with a refresher course or a fundamentals class that would better enable them to compete in basic skills or college level classes. Many of these classes could be self-paced and taught in a learning center. The students could then enroll in college, receive counseling, start taking a class and then be treated as continuing students in future semesters.

2. Community colleges offer remedial classes in basic skills and some high school level topics. One area that is generally overlooked is civics. Many community colleges have large populations of non-native students, as well as students who were not effectively engaged in their k-12 studies. As a result, these students often have great difficulty in satisfying the American Institutions requirements such as Political Science 1 and U.S. History. A remedial civics class would prepare

students to better compete in those classes.

3. Traditional college level skills classes might be reconfigured to include lab time where students can get faculty or paraprofessional assistance. In some courses this is already done, but many could still do this. For example an Algebra I class normally meets five hours a week in class. It might better serve student needs if it met four hours a week in class and then required two hours a week of lab time "to be arranged." This could provide students with assistance, while at the same time generating additional WSCH. The WSCH generated would easily provide for the additional staff required.

4. Though community colleges provide staff development opportunities for faculty as a result of AB 1725, additional efforts need to be implemented to prepare faculty to work more effectively with our present student clientele. Our Title III program has both faculty training and curriculum innovation as a built in component. Required training in teaching methodology ought to be contemplated for both new hires and faculty who continually have high attrition rates. Perhaps, if an instructor had consecutive semesters of attrition in their classes that exceeded the college average by 10%, they could be directed to utilize their staff development time in a teaching methodology program.

5. Currently Los Angeles Valley College is applying for a grant which if accepted would join faculty from our English, Math and Philosophy Departments together in an effort to devise new strategies for teaching Math Word Problems.

I would appreciate learning of any innovative programs your colleges offer to better serve students or generate additional WSCH. My phone number is (818) 781-1200 Ext. 325, my FAX number is (818) 785-4672, and my E-Mail address is Moyerra@SMTPLINK.LACCD.EDU. I look forward to hearing from you.

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